

# KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION KNOX COUNTY BUDGET COMMITTEE

## Joint Budget Committee Meeting

Knox County Commission and Budget Committee

Thursday – October 17, 2019 – 5:00 P.M.

A Joint Meeting of the Knox County Commission and the Knox County Budget Committee was held on Thursday, October 17, 2019, at 5:00 P.M., at the County Courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine. The Administrative Assistant was present to record the minutes of the meeting.

**Commission members present were:** Commissioner Dorothy G. Meriwether, District #1, Commissioner Richard L. Parent, District #2 and Commissioner Sharyn L. Pohlman, District #3.

**County staff present included:** County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Wendy Galvin, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, Chief Deputy Tim Carroll, Deputy Register of Deeds Madelene Cole, Register of Probate Elaine Hallett, Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves, Systems Administrator Mike Dean and Judge of Probate Carol Emery.

**Budget Committee members present were:** Chair Bob Duke, Nicholas Lapham, Shawn Levasseur, Gayle Gallant, Roger Peabody, Randy Stearns, Barry Norris and Thomas Marshall, Jr.

**Others in Attendance:** William Post Rockport Town Manager, Jeremy Shaw Airport Maintenance Supervisor, Joanne Richards Thomaston Budget Committee, Sandy Moore Thomaston Select Board and Stephen Carroll Rockland Resident.

### Joint Commission & Budget Committee Public Hearing

#### Commission Hearing Room

Thursday – October 17, 2019 – 5:00 P.M.

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|------|------|--|
| I.   | 5:00 | Meeting called to order (Chair Bob Duke for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Richard Parent for the Knox County Commission)  |
| II.  | 5:01 | Approve Minutes (Chair Bob Duke for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Richard Parent for the Knox County Commission)<br>1. Minutes of the Joint Budget Committee Meeting of July 25, 2019 |
| III. | 5:03 | Election of Budget Committee Officers<br>1. Chair<br>2. Vice Chair<br>3. Secretary   |
| IV.  | 5:08 | Public Hearing<br>1. Budget Committee Chair Opens Public Hearing on 2020 Proposed Knox County Budget<br>2. Budget Committee Chair Closes Public Hearing  |
| V.   | 5:10 | Joint Meeting with the Knox County Budget Committee and Knox County Commission for the Presentation of the Proposed 2019 Budget (County Administrator Andrew Hart)   |
| VI.  | 5:30 | Budget Review<br>1. District Attorney (Pg. 13-14)<br>2. Probate (Pg. 19)<br>3. Registry of Deeds (Pg. 12)<br>4. County Administration & IT (Pgs. 8-9)<br>5. Debt Service (Pg. 22)                          |
| VII. |      | Adjourn  |

**I. Meeting Called to Order**

The October 17, 2019 joint meeting of the Knox County Budget Committee and the Knox County Commission was called to order by Budget Committee Chair Bob Duke and Commissioner Chair Richard Parent at 5:01 P.M.

- *Chair Duke made a motion to call the meeting to order at 5:01P.M.*
- *Commissioner Parent made a motion to call the meeting to order at 5:01P.M.*

**II. Approve Minutes****1. Minutes of the Joint Commission & Budget Committee Meeting of July 25, 2019**

- *Nick Lapham made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Joint Commission & Budget Committee Meeting of July 25, 2019. Randy Stearns seconded the motion. A vote was taken with six (6) in favor. (Two (2) abstained: Gayle Gallant & Roger Peabody)*
- *Commissioner Pohlman made motion to approve the Minutes of the Joint Commission & Budget Committee Meeting of July 25, 2019. Commissioner Parent seconded the motion. A vote was taken with two (2) in favor. (One (1) abstained: Dorothy Meriwether).*

**III. Election of Budget Committee Officers:****1. Chair**

- *Roger Peabody made a motion to appoint Bob Duke as the Chair. Barry Norris seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

**2. Vice Chair**

- *Nick Lapham made a motion to appoint Shawn Levasseur as the Vice Chair. Randy Stearns seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

**3. Secretary**

- *Nick Lapham made a motion to appoint Randy Stearns as the Secretary. Gayle Gallant seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

**IV. Public Hearing:****1. Budget Committee Chair Opens Public Hearing on 2020 Proposed Knox County Budget**

- William Post Rockport Town Manager spoke –Asking the Budget Committee & Knox County Commissioners to support MCEED for 2020 year. William has been a board member for MCEDD over the past 10 ½ years. The array of services MCEDD provides is very valuable he stated. Some services provided are Comprehensive Planning, Access to EBA Funding, Access to Northern Boarder Grant Funding, Grant Writing, and not limited to Economic Development Services. There is a huge range of services MCEDD can provide to all the towns in Knox County. Currently there are several towns that are individual members that pay dues. By Knox County providing that funding all the communities within Knox County would then automatically be members. The County could also take advantage of Grant Writing Services, Planning Services and all that they have to offer. Mr. Post has a letter prepared if anyone would like to take a look at it.
- Steve Carroll Rockland Resident. – Mr. Carroll asked the Committee not do the same thing they do every single year, which is to pretty much rubber-stamp the Budget that is given to each of you by the County Administrator. He was a previous member of the Budget Committee and knows they have to listen to a lot of organizations asking for money. Unfortunately, each of those organizations get the same amount each year, even though this year we are faced with a 5% increase. Last year, residents in RSU 13 towns of Knox County faced a substantial increase in taxes due to School Budget increase. We may expect the increase to be the same this year, and if you add on another 5% from the County Budget it doesn't give a lot of room to work. The Taxpayers backs are broken. Mr. Carroll feels that Board Members and Commissioners are getting too comfortable in their chairs. Mr. Carroll's suggestion would be for the Budget Committee and

Commissioners to go to work to find ways to reduce the Budget for Knox County, and if they can't then they need to step aside for others who want to do just that.

**V. A presentation for the Joint Commission & Budget Committee of the Proposed 2020 Budget (County Administrator Andrew Hart):**

*Administrator Hart asked everyone to sign in if they have not already done so and to please introduce yourself if you will be speaking.*

- Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the 2020 Budget is 1.5% as compared to 2.9% in the 2019 Budget. The CPI for 2017 increased 1.9% over the last twelve (12) months since August 2016. The CPI for 2016 increased 0.7% over the last 12 months since August 2015. The CPI for 2015 actually decreased as compared to August 2014. Therefore, there was no Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the 2015 Budget.
- The Wage increase is a 2% Step increase plus a 1.5% COLA for a total of 3.5%. Some departments saw a larger % increase or decrease because of a Grade change, new position or elimination of a position.
- FICA is set at 7.65% of the wages.
- Health Insurance is calculated with a 10% increase. Adjustments will be made mid to end of November for a final number.
- Workers Compensation is calculated with a 10% increase.
- Risk Pool is calculated with a 4% decrease.
- The Retirement Program includes the actual plan participation.
- Resignation/Termination Benefits include sick leave payments for those that have an excess of ninety (90) sick days by the end of the year.
- The 2020 total Budget shows a \$445,929 (5.66% increase for the County tax portion and \$117,350 & 10%) for the Communications' Budget which is an assessment.
- The 2020 proposed Tax Assessment is \$8,488,364 and the Dispatch Assessment fee is \$1,346,522. In 2019 Tax Assessment was \$8,033,518 and the Dispatch Assessment Fee was \$1,229,172. The 2019 figure utilized \$185,000 in Undesignated Fund Balance to reduce the 2019 Tax Assessment figure. The 2020 figure is utilizing \$158,000 of Undesignated Fund Balance to reduce the 2020 Tax Assessment.
- The budget process started in August, with assistance from Finance Director Robinson. Both Administrator Hart and Finance Director Robinson meet with each Department Manager regarding their departmental budget. On September 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> a meeting was held with each of the Department Managers to review each department's potential budget.
- A meeting was held on September 27<sup>th</sup> with Commissioners, Department Managers, Administrator Hart and Finance Director Robinson to go over the potential budgets for each department.
- October 17<sup>th</sup> is our first Budget Meeting with both Commissioners and Budget Committee Members.
- There are nine (9) major reasons for the increase in 2020:
  - 1) Increases in Personnel Services in all departments based on the wage increase.
  - 2) Projected increases in Health Insurance premium and also changes in participation.
  - 3) \$22,000 Domain Server replacement in the Administration/IT Budget.
  - 4) \$40,000 Net Increase in Capital for the Knox County Public Safety Building Budget for tile floor replacement in the Sheriff's and EMA offices.
  - 5) \$68,500 decrease in Deeds Revenue. This will be monitored as the Budget progresses.
  - 6) \$61,789 increase in Planning & Economic Development Requests.
  - 7) \$27,000 increase as \$185,000 was used from the Undesignated Fund Balance to reduce the 2019 Budget and using \$158,000 from Undesignated Fund Balance to reduce the 2020 Budget.
  - 8) \$139,627 increase in the Corrections Budget. Personnel Services increase including wages and benefits.

- 9) \$77,398 increase in Communications Capital as there are not adequate funds in Communications Undesignated Fund Balance to offset the Capital as has been done in the past years.

- ***Please note: All votes taken at each Joint Commission & Budget Committee Budget Review Meetings on Departmental Budgets are “straw votes”, with the exception of the December 5, 2019 final vote on the 2020 Knox County Budget.***

## VI. Budget Review:

### 1. District Attorney (Natasha Irving)

- Challenges that are affecting budget:
- The total budget has increased by \$17,131 a four (4%) increase over the 2019 Budget. Most of the increase is due to Personnel Services, Wages & Benefits.
- Drug analysis has proven to be cost savings – if we are charging with someone with possession of a substance, in order to get the conviction we need to prove that the substance is of illegal nature and what type of drug it is. This year we have really looked at those cases and decided which ones we really want to prosecute and which ones we can get a conviction on from a drug possession charge or which ones can we avoid the charge or could we avoid the charge because we’re getting someone into treatment. This is a collaborative effort to work on addition issues that we have within the County. This has resulted in a seventeen (17%) reduction in holding trials for convictions.
- 17% reduction in trial transcripts.
- Auto mileage – one staff member is attending a technology group overhaul in the Maine Court system and has been going to Augusta to work on changes. DA Irving will also ask for mileage if she has to travel out of the County. This is increasing from \$875 to \$1,332.
- There is a slight increase in Communications and Telephone bill.
- Internet/Web hosting has increased.
- Insurance – the cost has increased which is out of their control.
- Slight increase in Seminar and Training – Staff needs to be engaged with cutting edge conferences/trainings to be kept up to date with changes. (27% increase)
- Slight increase in Office Supplies and Equipment – due to sit stand workstations.
- DA’s Office started doing “share file” and so looking at eleven (11%) decrease. Law enforcement can share their files which cut down of use of paper.
- A second copy of Discovery is now needed so there is a nine (9%) increase in paper supply.
- Deferred Disposition fee – if a guilty plea is entered: as long as X,Y & Z are completed in the treatment process and successful for a specified term, they get what is called a “successful outcome” – there are huge incentives for doing this. DA Irving stated she would rather see someone who commits an offense to pay for themselves, instead of the taxpayer footing the bill to house them in Jail for a week. (*Thus the Deferred Disposition.*) This is on a sliding fee scale depending on their financial background.
- There is a 44% increase with the Supervision Fee line. With this option there is a sliding fee scale depending on the situation. A total of \$23,000 has been allotted for that line next year to help with fees/diversion program.
- DA Irving will not be able to be at the next Budget Meeting on October 24<sup>th</sup> – Restorative Justice will be in attendance – She wanted to let everyone know she is backs them 100%. DA Irving stated they do incredible work, and they have approximately a 100% success rate of getting back restitution.
- Question was asked about Deferred Disposition: “Is someone allowed to participate if they are a repeat offender?” DA Irving stated yes. As long it was not a dangerous offense like sexual assault, assault or something in a dangerous nature.

- DA Irving was asked, “You say you represent other Counties other than Knox County. What percentage of your office does Knox County pay for?” DA Irving responded by saying, “Only one quarter of the fee is charged to Knox County as there are four (4) Counties. Each County is only responsible for work that is done in their County.”
- A question was asked about the other Counties DA Irving works for are they experiencing the same type of increases? DA Irving stated yes they all are. She said every dollar amount is not exact but the amounts are pretty close.
- Question was asked regarding the Budget construction for Computer Services. There are two Computer type lines: one for Internet/Webhosting and the other is for Computer Supplies & Equipment. Those two lines show up in all the Budgets, yet we have an IT department. Should this all show up under the IT Budget so it can be seen all in one place? Can this be explained? Administrator Hart explained that the DA Budget is unique, and a lot of their equipment is State owned. Whereas, the County employees budget for computer replacements in each individual department.
- Question was asked about Deferred Dispositions: is there a financial impact on Law Enforcement and other agencies in the County? The Sheriff answered by saying the Sheriff’s Office and DA’s Office work closely to keep certain offenders out of Jail with Deferred Dispositions program. Where this is a new program it’s a little premature to answer this question with a solid “in the long-run” cost savings answer.

***A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator’s budget recommendation of (\$487,253):***

*In favor: 7 (Bob Duke, Gayle Gallant, Randy Stearns, Barry Norris, Shawn Levasseur, Roger Peabody, and Thomas Marshall, Jr.)*

*Against: 0*

*Abstained: 1 (Nick Lapham)*

***A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Administrator’s budget recommendation of (\$487,253):***

*In favor: 3 (Richard Parent, Sharyn Pohlman & Dorothy Meriwether)*

*Against: 0*

*Abstained: 0*

## **2. Probate**

- The Budget has increased by \$9,037 (7%) over the 2019 Budget.
- Personnel Services, Wages and Benefits are the main reason for the increase.
- Supplies have increased due to the Passports – more ink & paper is needed.
- Fees are up due to the printing cost for the Passports.
- Advertising has increased due to now able to complete Passports (photos).
- Health Insurance cost is an estimated premium. There will be a calculation on whole budget closer to finalization.
- Finance Director Robinson, Register Hallett & Administrator Hart will monitor the Revenue throughout the Budget process and make adjustments as needed right up until the final vote.
- Probate has been learning a new code that was adopted by the Legislature. The new code rolled out required changes in all forms used and form generated by volunteers; these are in turn review by Judges and Registers.
- Probate in Knox County was the first in the State to have the E-file system.
- Acknowledgement was given from a Commissioner regarding a memo from Administrator Hart which was written to the Knox County Commissioners, regarding recommending an increase in compensation for Judge Emery. Most of the other counties are planning an increase to reflect the increased workload. Judge Emery is only requesting the same increase (4%) as the other three (3) Probate Office staff members. Judge Emery has only received a COLA for approximately seven-eight (7-8) years. The workload has increased significantly due to the Statue change. Judge Emery is one of three, of the most senior Judges in the State.

*A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of **\$142,623**:*

*In favor: 7 (Bob Duke, Randy Stearns, Shawn Levasseur, Barry Norris, Gayle Gallant, Roger Peabody and Thomas Marshall, Jr.)*

*Against: 0*

*Abstained: 1 (Nick Lapham)*

*A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of **\$142,623**:*

*In favor: 3 (Richard Parent, Sharyn Pohlman & Dorothy Meriwether)*

*Against: 0*

*Abstained: 0*

### **3. Registry of Deeds**

- The Budget for Deeds has increased by \$42,498 (21%) over the 2019 Budget.
- Decrease in staff – went from two (2) Full-time & one (1) Part-time employees to three (3) Full-time employees.
- For the 2020 Budget – in need of one (1) new computer.
- Revenue is down \$68,500 (-15%) in 2019 – the Revenue cannot be predicted, it depends on the size/price of the transaction and the amount of foreclosures.
- Finance Director Robinson, Register Cottrell and Administrator Hart monitor the Revenue throughout the Budget process and make adjustments as needed right up until the final vote.

*A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of **(\$157,674)**:*

*In favor: 7 (Bob Duke, Randy Stearns, Barry Norris, Gayle Gallant, Shawn Levasseur, Roger Peabody, and Thomas Marshall, Jr.)*

*Against: 0*

*Abstained: 1 (Nick Lapham)*

*A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of **(\$157,674)**:*

*In favor: 3 (Richard Parent, Sharyn Pohlman & Dorothy Meriwether)*

*Against: 0*

*Abstained: 0*

### **4. County Administration & IT**

- Total Budget has increased by \$44,896 (8%) over the 2019 Budget. The main reasons for this increase are that the IT Technical Support Specialist is now budgeted at twelve (12) month's salary as it was budgeted for eight (8) months in the 2019 Budget, which was a new position for the 2019 Budget with an April start date.
- Contractual Services increased by \$3,821 (2%).
- Dues and Membership increased as the Maine County Commissioners Association (MCCA) changed their dues formula for all County paying members. Knox County had roughly \$2,500 increase in annual dues.
- The Capital increased by \$22,000 (100%) for the Domain Server Replacement. The current operating systems domain servers (total of four (4) physical servers) will no longer be supported by Microsoft after the beginning of 2020. These servers run our network and store all departments'

data. Not upgrading will present us with a major security risk as well as the risk of hardware failures. Our current hardware will not support an upgraded operating system.

***A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$595,604:***

*In favor: 6 (Randy Stearns, Barry Norris, Gayle Gallant, Shawn Levasseur, Roger Peabody, and Thomas Marshall, Jr.)*

*Against: 0*

*Abstained: 2 (Nick Lapham & Bob Duke)*

***A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$595,604:***

*In favor: 3 (Richard Parent, Sharyn Pohlman & Dorothy Meriwether)*

*Against: 0*

*Abstained: 0*

## **5. Debt Service**

- Debt Service has decreased as our interest payment as decreased. The Knox County Public Safety Building at 301 Park Street is in its eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) year of the bond payment of principal and interest. This is a fifteen (15) year note at 1.8669%. The total payment for calendar year 2020 is \$192,432 which is \$4,950 less than the 2019 payment of \$197,382. The Bond Principal amount remains at \$165,000/year for the remaining seven (7) years which matures in 2027. In 2020, EMA requested for grant funding consideration, that EMA's apportioned share of the Public Safety Building Principal and interest Payment. This will result in a revenue offset of \$29,076. The TAN Interest is the same as 2019.

***A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$179,856:***

*In favor: 8 (Bob Duke, Randy Stearns, Barry Norris, Gayle Gallant, Shawn Levasseur, Nick Lapham, Roger Peabody, and Thomas Marshall, Jr.)*

*Against: 0*

*Abstained: 0*

***A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$179,856:***

*In favor: 3 (Richard Parent, Sharyn Pohlman & Dorothy Meriwether)*

*Against: 0*

*Abstained: 0*

- Administrator Hart announced all Budget Binders need to be returned at the end of the Budget season. All contents can be kept; just the tabs and binders need to be returned.
- Chair Duke stated if anyone has questions regarding a Budget to please email or call Administrator Hart before the next Budget Meeting on October 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Administrator Hart wanted to let everyone know the results from MRI's study have not been finalized. As soon as the study has been finalized he will update everyone.

## **VII. Adjourn**

- *Randy Stearns made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Nick Lapham seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*
- *Commissioner Meriwether made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Pohlman seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor*

The next Joint Commission & Budget Committee Meeting will be held on **October 24<sup>th</sup>**  
**@ 5:00 P.M.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:32 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Galvin  
Administrative Assistant

**The Knox County Budget Committee & Knox County Commission approved these minutes  
at the Joint Meeting held on October 31, 2019.**